

Her Happily Ever After by Luna0603

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Summary: SEQUEL to Her Worst Nightmare. Set in 1993 at Mike and El's wedding. Visits the gang six years after the ending of Her Worst Nightmare. Lots and lots of Mileven fluff. COMPLETE.

1. Chapter 1

A/N: Hello everyone. I want to thank you for all the wonderful feedback I received on Her Worst Nightmare, as it was my return to writing, so I am glad that it went over well. I am currently writing another story on here called Tied Together With A Smile (which would be awesome if you went and checked that out), and I wasn't intending to post this until that story was complete. However, the urge to write this was driving me crazy, and I really wanted to write some happy fluffy Mileven content. So, to those who requested a happy follow-up, I hope this lives up to your expectations :)

Disclaimer: I do not own Stranger Things or any of its original characters.

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Twenty-two-year-old Michael Wheeler stood in front of the full-length mirror and adjusted his black tie. His hands were shaky, and he knew he was anxiously fidgeting at this point by adjusting his tie, straightening his jacket, and touching his hair. He looked great, but he knew that no matter how good he looked, it would pale in comparison to the embodiment of perfection that was getting ready in a room in another wing of the building. There was a knock on the door before it opened and Will walked in wearing his own black suit and dusty rose colored tie.

"How you holding up?" Will asked, walking over and placing a hand on his best friend's shoulder. Mike adjusted his tie again and ran his hand flat over its length.

"I'm freaking out, Will," he admitted.

"Come on, everything is going to be perfect," Will assured him. "You and El were made for each other."

"I know that, and I cannot wait to marry her," Mike said, and Will noticed that his friend couldn't contain the smile that naturally formed on his face when he said the words 'marry her.'

"Then there's nothing to freak out about. You look fantastic, I'm sure she does too. The place is beautiful. Everything is going so smoothly," Will said logically, and Mike nodded along. He knew Will was right, but he could not calm his nerves. Mike knew that in one short – or, as it was feeling, excruciatingly long – hour, he would be starting the next chapter of his life with his best friend.

"You know, El and I actually met ten years ago today," Mike reminded Will as he walked toward the couch in the room and took a seat.

"Oh, that's right," Will said casually, sitting next to Mike. Of course Will had known that. Mike had proposed to El only six months prior, and they had originally planned on having a year-long engagement. But when they saw that November 7, 1993, the ten-year anniversary of the day they met, fell on a weekend, the decision was made.

"When I saw her for the first time in the woods that night, I never would've imagined this is where we would be exactly ten years later," Mike said dreamily.

"Are you practicing your vows on me right now?" Will joked, causing Mike to chuckle.

"No, my family is here. You know they don't know anything about the first couple years of our relationship," Mike reminded him. When Mike had started writing his vows, his mind had been flooded with years of memories with El. The night they met, calling her every day for 353 days when he didn't know if she was alive, their reunion at the Byers' old house when Mike learned El had been alive that whole time; those were pivotal moments in their relationship that had spoken to how strong their love was, but Mike could not use any of them in his vows because of what it would expose to the people attending the wedding who didn't know the truth about El's past. He had been sad because he wanted his vows to El to be as personal and honest as possible. So Mike wrote two versions of his vows. The first one he wrote was what he really wanted to say to her, and the second was what he would actually be able to say at the wedding. He kept and memorized both copies. He had a plan.

There was another knock on the door, and Lucas walked in wearing a

black suit and a dusty rose colored tie that matched Will's.

"People are starting to show up," Lucas said as he walked over to the mirror to admire his reflection and straighten his suit jacket.

"It doesn't start for another forty-five minutes," Will said, looking at his watch.

"Would you want to risk rushing in the door late to the police chief's daughter's wedding?" Lucas retorted. It was true; since Hopper had reappeared after being assumed dead, the town had a different type of fear and respect for him. That was due, of course, in part to how little information he had provided about where he had been and what he had been doing. While Hopper had not disclosed to anyone what he had been doing with the Russians, no one in Hawkins was blind to the bulk he had gained and the even tougher demeanor he had. "It's actually kind of funny that Mike was more afraid of Hopper back before everything with the Russians happened than he was afterward."

"I was never *afraid* of Hopper," Mike insisted. "Besides, we actually have a pretty good relationship right now."

"Not that he has a choice. You're about to be his son-in-law," Lucas pointed out.

"That doesn't mean anything. My grandparents hated my dad, and they were not afraid to voice it," Will said.

"Okay, well no one hates anyone here," Mike interjected. "Hopper and I had a rough start, but we sorted everything out that year when El was in the hospital. Plus, he clearly likes me enough to let me marry his daughter."

"What would you have done if he said no?" Will wondered. Mike shrugged his shoulders and thought back to that spring day seven months ago.

Mike was sitting in his car, his hands still gripping the steering wheel, staring at the cabin in front of him. Hopper was not expecting him this Saturday morning, and Mike knew he would be taking the police

chief by surprise when he knocked on the door in a few minutes' time. He had considered calling Hopper ahead of time and inviting him out to lunch. Mike liked the idea of witnesses. But, he knew that Hopper would respect him more if this conversation was had privately, so here Mike sat, staring at the cabin and repeating over and over in his head the words he planned to say. Mike took a deep breath and exited his car, walking up to the cabin and knocking three times. He held his breath while he waited for an answer. After a moment, Mike heard the door unlock, and it opened to reveal Hopper standing before him, a confused look on his face and a cigarette dangling between his lips.

"Mike. This is a surprise," Hopper greeted. "Is El with you?"

"No, she's not. Do you mind if I come in?" Mike asked, and Hopper stepped to the side, allowing him to enter. Mike took a look around the cabin; nothing had changed since the last time he was here. The same pictures hung on the walls, the same blanket was draped over the couch, the same television show even happened to be playing. Mike had been here hundreds of times, but today was different.

"To what do I owe this surprise?" Hopper asked, putting his cigarette out in an ashtray on the counter.

"I was hoping that we could talk for a few minutes," Mike said, his heart in his throat and his stomach doing somersaults. Hopper walked into the living room and sat in his recliner, gesturing for Mike to have a seat on the couch.

"What's on your mind? Does El even know that you're here?" Hopper gave a questioning look.

"No, she doesn't," Mike replied. He had told El that he was going to Hawkins for the weekend to visit his family, knowing that El wouldn't have been able to join because she was meeting with a few of her classmates to work on a group project. "And I would prefer if you didn't tell her I was here, either."

"What is this about?" Hopper asked slowly, narrowing his eyes. Mike felt chills run down his spine, and he gulped down his nerves, wanting to speak as clearly and confidently as possible.

"Look, I know that you and I have had kind of a rocky past, but I like to think that we understand each other better now. You took in El and gave her a home and a life that she wouldn't have had otherwise, and your first priority was always to protect her. She loves you for that," Mike began. "I've known El for almost ten years now, and she is easily the best and most important thing in the world to me. She is the sweetest, most beautiful woman in the world, and I love her. I want to spend the rest of my life with her. Like you, my first priority has always been to protect her. I want you to know that I intend to spend the rest of my life doing just that, loving and protecting her every day. You are the most important man in El's life, so the reason I'm here today is to tell you that I want more than anything to marry your daughter, and I hope I have your blessing in doing so." When Mike finished, he maintained his eye contact with Hopper and awaited his response. He had been surprised that when he started talking, the feelings in his throat and stomach had disappeared, and all he felt was the love in his heart for El while he was spilling his feelings in front of Hopper. Now, as he sat there waiting for Hopper to speak, he started to feel his palms become sweaty in the silence. How long was Hopper going to make him wait? The police chief sat across from Mike in his chair, staring into Mike's eyes, no expression on his face. Hopper leaned slowly forward, reaching for a pack of cigarettes on the coffee table. He took one out and lit it, taking in a long drag before leaning back in his recliner.

"You know, when you were teenagers, I made that three inch rule to protect her," Hopper said, tilting his head toward the closed door of El's bedroom. "I knew you liked her, but I also knew you were fourteen. Your hormones at that time... constantly making out." Mike felt his cheeks start to turn red, and he noticed one corner of Hopper's mouth tug upward in amusement at Mike's embarrassment.

"But then everything happened that Fourth of July, and I saw for the first time how seriously you took protecting my girl," Hopper continued in a softer tone. "And when she went into that coma... you spent an entire year of your life visiting her just so you could talk to her and hope that she heard you. She did, by the way, kid." Hopper felt the sting of tears in the corners of his eyes, so he leaned back and took another long drag from his cigarette.

"I'm not one who particularly enjoys talking about my feelings, but there is not a doubt in my mind that everything you just said to me is true," Hopper said. "Actually, the only thing that you may have been wrong about was saying that I'm the most important man in El's life. That's you, Mike. The hardest thing for a father to do is give his daughter's hand to another man, but there is no one I would rather see her live her life with than you. Of course you have my blessing." Mike sighed in relief and felt the sting of tears in his own eyes. He was so overwhelmed with emotion; he had assumed that Hopper would agree to offer Mike his blessing to marry El, but Mike had not expected Hopper to be so touching and heartfelt in his response.

"Thank you," Mike said, unsure of what else to say, and extended his hand for Hopper to shake. Hopper looked from Mike's hand up to the young man's face, and the sight of Mike's uncontrollable smile and glistening eyes warmed Hopper's heart. Hopper reached forward and grasped Mike's hand firmly, but then he pulled his future son-in-law forward and embraced him in a hug. Mike was stunned, knowing this was uncharacteristic, as he could count on one hand the number of times he and Hopper had hugged in the past ten years.

"Take care of her," Hopper said quietly, patting Mike's shoulder before pulling back from the embrace.

"Always," Mike replied simply. When Mike left the cabin that day, he drove straight to the jewelry store in town and bought the ring that he had been keeping an eye on. He hoped El would love it.

El could not take her eyes off the diamond on her left ring finger as she sat in the chair, her hired makeup artist brushing product over her cheekbones. She was wearing her wedding dress, a white towel draped over her chest to protect herself from any fallout from the makeup, and her hair was already done. Truthfully, she was becoming impatient waiting for her makeup to be complete; she just wanted it to be time to start. She wanted to see Mike, and she wanted to be able to call him her husband. El's lips formed a smile at the thought of it. In less than an hour, she would be walking down the aisle to join the love of her life in their next chapter together. She couldn't wait.

"It is a beautiful ring," the makeup artist, Sandra, said, noticing El's

eyes admiring it. "How did he propose?"

Around the room, Joyce, Max, Nina, and Nancy all directed their attention to El's conversation, moving closer to hear the story. They had all heard it numerous times, but it never got old.

It was nearly six o'clock in the evening, and El was resting her head on the passenger window as Mike drove the two of them to the Italian restaurant he had made them reservations at for dinner. Earlier that day, Mike and El had graduated from college along with the rest of their friends. After the ceremony, they had all gone out for a celebratory lunch, including all of their parents, and then they had retreated to Lucas and Max's apartment where Lucas and Max were throwing themselves a joint graduation party. El spent a couple hours mingling at the party, conversing with friends she had made during her four years at the university. She was having a great time, but she was starting to get tired after the long celebratory day, and she knew she was waking up early the next morning to drive to Hawkins.

"We're going to head out," Mike said to Lucas, his arm around El's shoulders as the two of them prepared to bid their friends a good night.

"Okay, thanks for coming. Drive safe," Lucas said, offering hugs. El had thought she saw a silent communication between Lucas and Mike when the two guys looked at each other, but she couldn't place it and decided she was just tired. Mike took El's hand and led her down to his car which was parked on the street. He opened El's car door, and before she took her seat inside, she thanked him with a soft kiss on the lips. Even after nearly ten years together, Mike still showed his love for her in the smallest caring ways, and El was forever grateful for that.

"So, I was thinking earlier. Why don't we just go down to Hawkins tonight?" Mike suggested as he started his car.

"Why would you want to do that? It's going to start getting late," El pointed out.

"It's only four. We would be there by six," Mike said. "Plus then we could sleep in, not have to wake up early to drive, and we'd be

getting out of town tonight before everyone else who's waiting until tomorrow, so the traffic will be better." El could not argue with that logic.

"Okay. We'll just have to stop by our apartment so I can finish packing my bag," El agreed.

"I already took care of that. Everything's in the trunk," Mike smiled at her as he merged onto the highway. El felt pulled back slightly in her seat as Mike accelerated, the engine revving loudly.

"What's the rush?" she asked.

"We've got a reservation to make," Mike shrugged.

"Michael Wheeler, what are you up to?" El asked, crossing her arms over her chest. Mike briefly looked her way with an innocent expression on his face.

"What? Can't I take my girlfriend out for a nice dinner to celebrate graduating from college?" he asked. El narrowed her eyes, not buying his innocent act, but deciding not to push it. "You do look beautiful, by the way."

"Thanks," El smiled sweetly. She was wearing a simple black dress that ended mid-thigh. The top was a bit low-cut, and it was sleeveless. Their graduation gowns had been black, so it was the easiest solution to wear underneath, and El had not had time to change between each event of the day. Similarly, Mike was wearing black dress pants, a white dress shirt, and a black tie. With his skin tone and dark hair, El thought the classic black and white was a good look for him, and the way the sleeves of his dress shirt were currently rolled up to just below his elbows pulled the look together even better.

Mike and El arrived at the restaurant at six o'clock on the dot, and Mike took El's hand and led her to the hostess. They checked in and were promptly seated at a small table near the window. Moments later, Mike had ordered a bottle of Merlot for the two of them as they scanned the menu. After placing their dinner order, Mike reached across the table and took El's left hand, caressing the back of it with

his thumb. His eyes were drawn to the simple white gold bracelet with the singular diamond that she wore on her left wrist. It was the first piece of jewelry he had ever given her, and he had saved for months to buy it for her for their first real Christmas together. Since that year, Mike had bought El numerous other pieces of jewelry – earrings, necklaces, bracelets – all of which she wore interchangeably. But that first bracelet with 11/7/1983 engraved behind the diamond was the only thing that El consistently wore every day.

"I love that you still wear that every day," Mike said, and El followed his eyes to the piece of jewelry on her wrist.

"I always will. I love everything you do for me and everything you surprise me with, even though you know you never have to, but this will always be my favorite," El smiled and lovingly met her boyfriend's eyes.

"You know, I'm really proud of you," Mike said, switching gears.

"Why is that?" El asked.

"Just thinking of where you were ten years ago... You've overcome so much in your life, El, and I've watched you transform over the years into just the most incredible woman I could imagine," Mike explained. "You were so scared to start high school our junior year, but you did it, and now you've made it through college too. You're just so smart and so brave, and I am so proud of you every day."

"Mike, you're so sweet," El smiled and squeezed his hand. She felt the warmth in her heart when Mike had called her smart. During their teenage years, El's biggest insecurity had always been not understanding what her friends were talking about and knowing that she would understand if she had been a normal kid. Mike had never made her feel uncomfortable, and El knew that she could ask him about anything in the world, and he would explain it to her without judgement and without making her feel lesser than himself. She had been scared to join them in high school because she knew not all high school kids would be as kind as Mike was, but with his help, she adjusted well. By the time college had come around, El was thrilled to tackle the new adventure with Mike.

"I just want you to know how much you mean to me," Mike said gently, squeezing El's hand in return.

"I do. You tell me every day, sweetie," El remarked sweetly. "And I hope you know that you mean everything to me. Everything that you just said about me, none of it would have been possible without you." Mike was about to object and tell her that she was the one who worked hard and made things happen for herself, but the server arrived with their dinners, so instead Mike raised El's left hand to his lips and gave it a soft kiss before releasing it.

The two of them enjoyed their dinner and wine, finishing the bottle easily. Under the table, Mike's right leg bounced anxiously, and he was very aware of the small box burning a hole in his pocket. He felt every inch of that box against his thigh, and now that dinner was over, his nerves were growing. Mike rubbed both of his sweaty palms on the napkin in his lap before casually folding it onto the table. He paid the bill, and he and El walked hand-in-hand from the restaurant back to his car.

"Thank you for dinner. I am glad we came down to Hawkins tonight," El said, leaning her back against the car and wrapping her arms around Mike's neck to pull him close to her. She raised up on her tiptoes to close the gap between their lips, and Mike placed his hands on her hips, feeling the entire length of her body pressed against his own. The thought of El feeling the small box in his pocket suddenly entered Mike's mind, and he shifted so that part of him was no longer touching her.

"What's wrong?" El asked, concerned by her boyfriend's sudden movement.

"Nothing," Mike replied quickly. He opened El's car door for her. "There's one more place I want to go before we turn in for the night." El did not ask where they were headed, but she watched out the window as the familiar scenery passed by. After a short drive, she looked straight ahead out the windshield and recognized the quarry. Specifically, the cliff that Mike had jumped from nearly ten years ago. Mike got out of the car and opened El's door, grasping her hand and leading her slowly toward the rocks looking over the water. He did not take her too close to the edge, especially since she was

wearing heels. The sun was setting, which cast a pink and blue haze through the clouds over the water. Mike stepped behind El and wrapped his arms around her waist from behind, leaning forward to place a kiss on her cheek as they watched the sunset before them.

"You know, if it wasn't for you, I would just remember this as a place I was bullied as a kid," Mike said quietly, and El felt a pang of sadness in her heart so she pulled Mike's arms tighter around her waist. "But you made this place special to me. This was the first place where you came back to me when I didn't know where you went. And not only did you come back to me, you saved my life." El leaned her head back against Mike's chest as she remembered that day when they were only twelve years old. She had run away because of how angry Mike had gotten with her, but when she heard that he was in trouble, El had immediately returned. Saving him from that fall had drained so much of her energy, but El had known even then that she would've used every last bit of her powers to protect Mike. And when Mike had embraced her afterward, she had known that his were the only arms she ever wanted to feel around her. Standing there almost ten years later with Mike's arms around her as they watched the sunset, El felt more love in her heart than she had ever thought possible.

"Do you remember when you lived with the Byers and you came here over our first real Christmas together?" Mike continued softly, and El nodded in his arms. "And do you remember when we spent the whole day together, just the two of us?"

"Of course," El replied gently. "We ate at the diner and then we came here and just spent the afternoon together. That night we went to dinner and then you took me to see Christmas lights for the first time. It was beautiful."

"And you've asked me to take you to see the lights every year since then," Mike laughed, though he knew he would take her every year even if she didn't ask. "Now I have a surprise for you."

"A surprise?" El repeated. Mike stepped back from her, which made El instantly feel colder because of his lack of touch. He took both of El's hands in his and stepped a few paces to their left, as if he were leading them to a certain spot on the ground.

"I know we still have quite a few months until Christmas, so in the meantime, I thought you might like your own private display," Mike said. Just then, the woods next to them illuminated the night sky which had fallen dark since the sun had set. El almost shielded her eyes from the brightness, and she stared in awe at the trees that were covered by a curtain of lights. She had no idea how Mike did this, and she didn't care.

"Mike, it's beautiful," El gasped.

"You're beautiful," Mike responded. El turned and saw that while she was staring at the lovely display before them, he had been staring only at her, feeling his heart flutter at the look on El's face.

"El, you are the best thing that has ever happened to me. You are the sweetest, funniest, bravest, most caring person in the world. I love how sentimental you are; how even the smallest things I do for you make you happy for days. I love how you find so much joy in the simple things in life like Christmas lights. I love how I feel when we're together, or when you look at me, or even when I think of you. After all these years, I still get butterflies when you smile at me," Mike divulged, still holding both of El's soft hands in his as he gazed into her big brown eyes.

"I love you so much, and I know I'll never be able to put it into words how much you truly mean to me, so I want to spend the rest of my life showing you instead," Mike took a deep breath and felt a lump rise in his throat at the sight of El's eyes brimming with tears.

"There's one more thing that was special about that day that we went to the diner, the quarry, and the lights display," Mike continued. "If you remember, that was the first time I ever referenced spending the rest of our lives together. I told you that someday, we would be together all the time. I told you that you were stuck with me for the long haul." El chuckled at the memory, her small laugh choking through the tears that were now streaming down her cheeks.

"I didn't say the words back then, but even at fourteen years old, I knew we would be here someday," Mike took another deep breath and reached deep into the pocket of his pants to pull out the small box that had been rubbing against him all evening. El watched in

amazement as Mike knelt on one knee before her and opened the box in his hands. "El, will you marry me?"

El hung on to each syllable as Mike asked the question she had been wanting to hear him ask her for so long. Her eyes were drawn to the sparkling ring in Mike's hand, but she soon directed her gaze back to the sight that was even more beautiful than the contents of that box or the display of lights in those trees. El's eyes met Mike's and everything faded away except for the love that they shared for each other and the words that hung between them, still awaiting an answer.

"Yes," El whispered excitedly through her tears, and Mike stood immediately, pulling El against his body and wrapping his arms tightly around her waist as their lips passionately connected. El's arms were wrapped around Mike's neck as their kiss deepened. After a moment, their lips gently separated from one another's and they stood in each other's arms, their foreheads touching, lost in complete bliss. Mike pulled back, realizing he was still holding the ring, and opened the box again to take it out and put it on El's finger. She watched with wide eyes as Mike slid it over her knuckle and to its resting place. It was a white gold band with the largest diamond El had seen in person. She would later find out it was a full carat. El stared lovingly at the ring, falling in love with the simplicity of the band with the single diamond. She couldn't help but realize how similar of a concept it was to the bracelet Mike had bought her all those years ago that he knew she loved so much; the ring was just on a much larger scale than the bracelet.

"Do you like it?" Mike asked timidly, noticing that El had been staring at the ring but had not made any comments.

"I love it," El replied, beaming up at him. "I love you."

"I love you too, baby. I can't wait to marry you," Mike said and wrapped his arms tightly around her again. She was the love of his life, and now she was one step closer to becoming his wife.

"What a beautiful story," Sandra said as El finished her recollection of the best day of her life so far. "But I must ask, how did the Christmas lights portion of it work?"

"He had gotten together with Jonathan, his brother-in-law, and told him what he wanted to do. Mike bought a bunch of lights, and he and Jonathan went to the quarry one day without me knowing, and Mike explained to him what he wanted done," El explained. "He and Jonathan put the lights up the weekend before Mike proposed, and that night, Jonathan was hidden in the trees waiting to light them up when Mike got me to the right spot. Jonathan was also able to get some great pictures of Mike proposing."

"That is so wonderful," Sandra said, placing a hand over her heart. She stood back and removed the towel from El's chest. "And you, my dear, are all set." El stood and walked to the center of the three-way mirror in the room. She could not believe the woman staring back at her in the glass was herself.

"You look absolutely stunning," Joyce said, appearing next to El with a look of pride on her face.

"So beautiful," Max agreed.

"Mike is going to lose his breath when he sees you," Nancy confirmed.

El's eyes remained locked with her own eyes in her reflection. She was standing in a strapless dress with a fitted bodice and a full ballgown-style skirt. It donned an amount of jewels on the bodice, causing El to sparkle in the light. Her hair was pulled into a half-up half-down style with the hair remaining on her back and shoulders twisted into large curls. El thought she had never looked this pretty, and she could not wait to be standing face-to-face with Mike rather than her own reflection. Just then, there was a knock on the door, and when Joyce opened it, El heard Hopper's voice on the other side. El turned around to face the doorway as her father entered the room, and a large smile crossed her face when she saw Hopper stop in his tracks and his mouth drop open.

"You look breathtaking," Hopper said.

"Thank you," El smiled.

"Are you ready? It's time," Hopper extended his arm to his daughter, and El took it. She took one last look at herself in the mirror before

turning to walk out of the room, each step bringing her closer to the man of her dreams who was waiting for her, just like he had proven time and time again that he always would.

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A/N: This story is going to have 2 chapters. Obviously in this one, you got to see Mike getting Hopper's permission and Mike proposing to El. In the second half of the story, you will see the entire wedding. It will likely be longer than this first half, and I am not sure when it will be ready, but I will post it as soon as I can. I hope you are enjoying it so far. Please leave a review and let me know!

2. Chapter 2

A/N: Welcome to the second half of this story. I'm sorry it took so long. Honestly, I've been going through some stuff, and I just haven't been in the right state of mind to write happy things... But overall I am satisfied with how this turned out, and I hope you all are too. Thanks for reviewing, and please enjoy the finale!

Angryfanfic: I am so glad!

Guest: Luckily, those stories are not related :)

Jenicakrung: Yay :)

39CluesStrangerThingsFan-Star: I know!

Niko: Thank you so much!

Jullauk: Thank you!

Nodownside: Thank you! I am glad you like it, and I look forward to reading your reviews on my other works. I appreciate you going to read them!

Phieillydinya: Thank you! I am glad you like it.

Mik El Max: I am so glad you love it!

Disclaimer: I do not own Stranger Things or any of its original characters.

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The church was full of Mike and El's family and friends who were chatting amongst each other while the pianist played soft music in the background. The arrangements of dahlias on the end of each pew filled the sanctuary with a floral scent. Outside, the early November air was brisk, but the sun was shining brightly against the stained-glass windows that lined the church walls. Mike and El had discussed several different venues other than a church for their wedding, and

they had even considered an outdoor wedding since it wasn't usually overly cold at this time of year. Ultimately, El had decided that she wanted a traditional church wedding because very few things about her life thus far had been traditional, and Mike immediately agreed with what she wanted. He had promised her long ago that their wedding could be anything she wanted it to be.

The guests were all seated, and the minister and bride and groom's parents had all entered. The piano crescendo as it began a new melody signified the entrance of the bridal party. Mike stood at the end of the aisle to the right of the altar, his heart in his throat, watching the double doors at the other end. The doors opened to reveal Nancy on Lucas's left arm. They proceeded down the aisle, Nancy in the floor-length dusty rose colored dress which matched Lucas's tie perfectly. She met her brother's eyes at the end of the aisle and offered him a supportive smile. As Nancy and Lucas reached the end of the aisle, they separated, Nancy to the left and Lucas to the right.

Dustin and Nina began their procession. Mike felt his palms grow clammy as El's entrance grew nearer. When Dustin and Nina had parted ways and taken their spots, Nina to the left standing slightly in front of Nancy, and Dustin to the right standing slightly in front of Lucas, Will and Max began their walk down the aisle.

Max met Mike's eyes and saw nothing but happiness and anticipation. Her heart warmed as she offered him a smile and nod before separating from Will. Max took her spot in front of Nina, and Will took his spot directly between Mike and Dustin, placing his hand on Mike's shoulder to offer a firm reassuring squeeze.

Mike took a deep breath and watched the doors again, his hands clasped patiently in front of his body. The last two to make an entrance before his bride were the ring bearer and flower girl. His four-year-old twin niece and nephew began stumbling their way down the aisle, generating chuckles from the crowd. Jonathan leaned from his seat in the front row and crouched next to the pew to guide his little ones in the right direction. Emma's light brown hair was in bouncy ringlets which reached the shoulders of the white dress she was wearing. She wore a dusty rose sash tied around the waist of her dress and carried a small wicker basket filled with white petals which

she was generously tossing on the floor next to her while she walked. Landon walked next to his sister, wearing a miniature version of the suits the groomsmen wore. Mike watched the two of them with adoration while they walked the length of the aisle to their dad, just like they had practiced the night before. When they reached the end of the aisle, Emma smiled and waved at Mike before Jonathan took hers and Landon's hands and led them to their seats in the front row, whispering to them how good of a job they did.

That was it. All that was left was El. Mike watched the closed double doors in anticipation, his nerves welling up in his stomach as he tried to keep breathing steadily. As the bridal march started playing, all the guests rose to their feet and turned toward the same doors Mike was staring at. The only person in attendance who didn't direct their attention to the end of the aisle was Karen Wheeler who stood in the front row, beaming up at her son. Mike felt a pair of eyes on him and glanced directly at his mother. Seeing the tears already in her eyes as she smiled at him caused a lump to rise in Mike's throat, and he held his breath as he directed his gaze back down the aisle.

When the doors opened, Mike thought his knees were going to give out on him. He blinked against the tears that had filled his eyes, not wanting to blur the sight of what was coming toward him. The bustle among the guests as they ogled and chattered about how gorgeous she looked was a blur to El as she walked down the aisle. She had met Mike's eyes the second the doors had opened, and if her arm wasn't being firmly held by Hopper's, she was certain she would have sprinted through the church and jumped into Mike's arms. He looked so handsome standing there waiting patiently for her to reach him. When they finally reached the end of their walk, Hopper turned to El and kissed her forehead.

"I love you, Dad," El whispered with tears glistening in her eyes.

"I love you too," Hopper whispered in return before clearing his throat to force down the lump that had formed. He turned to his right and extended his hand to Mike who accepted the firm handshake.

"Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. We are gathered today to join together Michael Theodore Wheeler and Jane Eleanor Hopper in holy matrimony," the minister began. "Who presents this woman to be

married to this man?"

"I do," Hopper said proudly. He beamed down at his daughter whose arm he was still holding, and he moved to extend her hand to Mike's. Mike happily took El's hand, shockwaves shooting up his arm as his fingertips touched her soft skin for the first time that day. Hopper nodded at his soon-to-be son-in-law and added quietly, "Take good care of her."

"I will," Mike responded just as quietly. Hopper strode swiftly to the left and took his seat in the front row while Max quickly collected El's bouquet from her, leaving Mike and El standing at the altar, their hands linked as the minister prepared to begin his opening remarks.

"You look perfect. You're so beautiful," Mike breathed so only El could hear him. She smiled back at him, her cheeks turning a light shade of pink. After all these years, he could still make her blush.

The minister dove in to his traditional opening statements and welcoming. Mike tried to listen, but he found it impossible to focus on anything other than the love of his life standing in front of him. He was nervously reciting the vows in his head that he had practiced over and over in front of the mirror, hoping that he wouldn't stumble too much or forget what he was saying and start rambling. He could see in El's eyes that she was hardly listening to the minister either; she was preoccupied by her own vows. El had been insistent on everything being traditional, except for the vows. She and Mike agreed to write their own so they would be personalized and special to their relationship. Now that the day was here, El was beginning to feel nauseous at the idea of speaking in front of so many people. She hoped she didn't mess up or sound too cheesy. Mike and El were both pulled from their thoughts when the minister asked everyone to bow their heads in prayer.

"Michael and Jane have elected to prepare their own vows," the minister transitioned after the conclusion of the prayer. He gestured toward Mike to begin. El felt Mike's hands shaking in hers, so she held them tighter and admired him as he took a deep breath and looked her straight in the eyes.

"El, you came into my life when I least expected it. I was a moody

teenager, content with spending my days playing Dungeons and Dragons and hanging out at the arcade with the few close friends that I had. I had never even given love a second thought until I met you. From the moment that I first saw you, I knew you were going to be somebody special to me. The more that I learned about you and got to know you, the clearer it became to me that I wanted to keep learning everything there was to know about you, and you still surprise me to this day," Mike said gently. "You are so incredibly brave, and you are easily the strongest person I know. You've overcome things in your life that could've easily turned you bitter and cynical, but you are the furthest thing from that. You are the kindest, sweetest woman in the world, and you have the biggest heart when it comes to the people you love."

"Being with you has taught me everything I need to know about love and about the future. I promise to love you every day of my life. I promise to be open and honest with you about everything, big or small. I promise to take care of you when you're sick like you took care of me last year when we rented a cabin in the Upper Peninsula and I got sick on the second day and was so upset about ruining our vacation. But you drove into town while I was sleeping and came back with chicken noodle soup and all three Star Wars movies," Mike continued, and El laughed through the tears that had begun to fall as she recalled that getaway. "That was the second time in our relationship that you watched all three of those movies in one day, which leads me to my next point. I promise to watch as many girly romance movies and chick flicks as you want, because I definitely owe you that. I promise to take you to see Christmas lights every winter. I promise to be your best friend and support you through anything and everything that comes our way, and most importantly, I promise to always have Eggos in the house. El, I love you more than I ever thought it was possible to love someone, and I cannot wait to spend the rest of my life with you."

When Mike finished, the minister turned his attention to El and gestured that it was her turn. Mike knew she was nervous about speaking in front of so many people, and he had told her last night at the rehearsal that when it was her turn for the vows, just keep her eyes on him. She was talking to him, after all, not everyone else. El squeezed Mike's hands and looked into his brown eyes, and she was

surprised how easy it was once she opened her mouth to speak. Everyone else melted away, and she and Mike were the only two in the room.

"Mike, it's no secret that I had a difficult childhood. I didn't have the loving family or friends, and I didn't even know what love was until I met you. You are the first person who came into my life and never left. You're the first person to accept me for who I am, all of my flaws and shortcomings. You have always been patient with me, and you never made me feel different because of how I was raised," El began. Mike felt tears welling up in his eyes again as he caressed the backs of El's hands with his thumbs. "You have shown me unconditional love every day since we met. When I was in that accident and ended up in the hospital for an entire year, you were the only person who came to visit me every single day. When I woke up, I was so scared; I wondered if physical therapy would be enough to help me relearn everything, I wondered if I would be able to start school on time, and I wondered how I was going to move on after missing out on an entire year of my life. The only thing I didn't have to wonder about was whether you would still love me. Our love is the only thing I'm sure of and the only thing that has been constant in my life."

"You are the smartest person I know. You're funny, caring, selfless, and loyal. You are my best friend, and I know I can count on you for anything. I promise to be the person you can rely on for anything, like you are for me. I promise to be there to celebrate with you through every high point and love and support you through every low point. I promise to always kill the spiders so you don't have to worry about them," El's lips tugged into a smirk and Mike chuckled as he remembered the time he saw a spider in the shower with him and jumped backward, falling and ripping the shower curtain down with him. By the time El had finished laughing at him, the spider had disappeared. But she had killed every spider since. "I promise to always love you more each day than I did the day before. You mean absolutely everything to me, and I never want to imagine my life without you."

When El finished, Mike wanted nothing more than to pull her into his arms and kiss her, but he knew he had to wait until it was time. The minister asked for the rings, and when Mike and El each had the

other's wedding band in hand, the minister addressed Mike again.

"Michael, repeat after me," he began. "I, Michael, take you, Jane."

"I, Michael, take you, Jane," Mike repeated, the name 'Jane' feeling weird as it left his tongue.

"To be my lawfully wedded wife, to love and to cherish for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part," the minister recited.

"To be my lawfully wedded wife, to love and to cherish for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part," Mike repeated. He then slid the ring onto El's left ring finger, and the minister turned his attention to El.

"And now Jane," he said. "I, Jane, take you, Michael."

"I, Jane, take you, Michael," El repeated, grinning from ear to ear at the feeling of the newly added ring on her left hand and knowing that they were one step closer to being officially married.

"To be my lawfully wedded husband, to love and to cherish for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part."

"To be my lawfully wedded husband, to love and to cherish for better or for worse, in sickness and in health, for richer or for poorer, until death do us part," El smiled. She held Mike's left hand and slid the wedding band down the length of his ring finger, her eyes not leaving his gaze. They were both waiting in anticipation for what the minister was to say next.

"By the power vested in me by the state of Indiana, I hereby pronounce you husband and wife," the minister announced before turning to Mike. "You may now kiss your bride." Not needing to be told twice, Mike wrapped his arms around El's waist and pulled her close to him, crashing his lips into hers as she placed her hands on either side of his face.

"I love you so much," Mike breathed against El's mouth when he pulled back from the kiss, resting his forehead against hers.

"I love you more," El smiled back. Mike knew that was not possible, but he said nothing more as they turned to face the crowd of guests who were standing and clapping.

In front row on the right side stood Ted, Karen, and Holly. Karen's cheeks were completely tearstained as she lovingly watched her son and new daughter-in-law. In the front row on the left stood Hopper and Joyce. Hopper's face was glowing with pride, and El was certain she saw the glimmer of a tear in the corner of his eye, while next to him Joyce's eyes were rimmed red from the tears she had let escape during the vows. The recessional played as Mike and El walked back down the aisle hand-in-hand as husband and wife.

An hour and a half later, after having the professional photos taken of the bride and groom and the wedding party, everyone arrived at the reception hall. Inside, the same autumn colors accentuated the room with dahlias and roses scattered throughout the centerpieces on each table. There was a DJ set up on the far end of the room, and they had sprung for an open bar.

Everyone was seated at their assigned tables, and Mike and El were in the middle of the head table with the bridal party seated on either side of them. The announcement had just been made that leading off the speeches would be the father of the bride, Jim Hopper. El beamed at her father who made his way to a more central location and accepted the microphone that was handed to him.

"Hello, for those of you who don't know me, my name is Jim Hopper," he began in his usual gruff tone, choosing to introduce himself even though he was unsure of who in Hawkins wouldn't know him. "El entered my life in a sort of unconventional way, but it turned out to be the biggest blessing I could've gotten. Over the years, I've watched her grow before my eyes into this beautiful, intelligent woman that you see here today." Hopper looked over at El, the pride gleaming in his eyes as his little girl grinned back at him.

"I'm not one to get too emotional, so I'll just say how proud I am to call you my daughter," Hopper said in a softer tone directly to El before pausing. He quickly reverted back to his gruff demeanor. "I've known Mike since he was in middle school, and a few years later when he started dating my daughter, much like most fathers... I

couldn't stand the kid." The guests laughed audibly at the police chief's comment, and El placed a hand on Mike's knee under the table, giving it a squeeze.

"Luckily, Mike grew into the only man I would ever trust with my little girl," Hopper said sincerely, facing his new son-in-law and nodding toward him. "I want to thank you all for joining us tonight. To Mike and El." Hopper led the room in raising their champagne glasses before returning to his seat. Next, Will stood and lifted the microphone.

"Hello, I'm Will Byers, the best man," he addressed the room. "Mike has been my best friend since kindergarten, so I've seen a lot of things make him happy over the years... acing tests, each time Nintendo comes out with a new game system, beating our friend Max at Dig Dug the one time it accidentally happened, to name a few... but nothing else in the world can light up Mike's face like El walking into the room. Mike and El are proof that true love does exist and that if you're meant to find each other, you will... even when you aren't looking. To Mike and El." Will raised his glass and the rest of the room followed suit. Lastly, Max stood to give her speech as the maid of honor.

"I want to start by explaining that Will, Lucas, Dustin, and I discussed the idea of each of the four of us giving a small speech, but ultimately we were able to save Mike the embarrassment of Lucas speaking publicly at his wedding... we were *not*, however, able to stop him from bribing me to start my speech with one of his awful jokes... So, guys, this is from Lucas. I'm sorry," Max started. Mike glanced quickly to his left at Lucas who was sitting on Will's other side smirking widely, watching his girlfriend in anticipation. Max deepened her voice slightly in an attempt to mimic Lucas. "Mike and El, for better or for worse... Mike couldn't have done any better, and El sure couldn't have done a lot worse." There was a wave of chuckles from the guests, and Mike looked back at Lucas, shaking his head and offering a small laugh while El leaned over to kiss his cheek.

"My name is Max Mayfield, and I want to thank everyone for coming to celebrate two of the greatest people I know getting married," Max began sincerely. "Becoming friends with El has proven to be one of the best moments of my life... I finally had someone to go to the mall

with and read Wonder Woman with. Plus, El doesn't find humor in disgusting bodily functions... Seriously, being friends with four boys is hard." Max glanced at El who laughed and gave a nod of agreeance. "I've been known to have been rough on Mike in the past, but it was only because I wanted to make sure my best friend was with someone who gave her everything she deserved. Seeing how happy El is when she is with Mike... or talking about Mike... or looking at Mike... I know that he is who she is meant to be with, and I could not be happier that they found each other. Mike and El, ladies and gentlemen." Max lifted her champagne glass into the air to lead the final toast.

A little later, after dinner had been served and cleared away, Mike held El close to him, his hands on her hips as they swayed slowly on the dancefloor. The DJ had announced the couple's first dance, so the two of them were the center of attention as their friends and family watched. El's arms were around Mike's neck as she stared up into his dark brown eyes, never wanting this moment to end. She wanted to stay here in Mike's arms, just the two of them, but she knew soon she and her new husband would have to resume the act of mingling with their guests until the next scheduled reception event. She had to enjoy these few minutes while she had them.

"Remember the first time we ever danced together?" Mike asked gently.

"Of course," El smiled as her mind drifted back to that evening in the Hawkins Middle School gymnasium. She had been so nervous to show up in front of all those people, but the moment she had seen Mike standing there, nobody else mattered. It was the first time Mike called her beautiful, and it was their first kiss since she returned to him. "How could I forget? I told you I didn't know how to dance, and you asked if I wanted to figure it out."

"That's also the same night I asked you to be my girlfriend," Mike added as he thought about the moment their relationship became official.

"And I told you I didn't know anything about dating, and you asked if I wanted to figure it out," El laughed as she fondly recalled that evening.

"Then you said yes, and here we are nine years later," Mike added. El smiled and laid her head on his chest, closing her eyes and listening to the beat of his heart as they continued to sway to the music. Mike kissed the top of her head before speaking softly to get her attention. "Hey, El."

"Yes?" she looked up at him with the same big eyes that have been melting him for ten years.

"There's something I wanted to say to you," Mike said. "It's just, in front of my family and people who don't really know everything about you and about us, there are certain things we can't talk about. And I wanted my vows to you to be as personal and honest as they could be... So there are some things I want to add."

"Okay," El encouraged him with a smile, lifting her fingers to toy with the ends of his hair while her hands remained clasped behind his neck.

"I fell in love with you ten years ago today. When we saw you in the rain that night, Dustin and Lucas saw a soaking wet little girl with a shaved head in a big yellow t-shirt, but the moment you looked at me, I knew you would be so much more than that to me," Mike began. "I had no idea that ten years from that very moment, I would be holding you in my arms and calling you my wife... this is a dream come true. The type of stuff fairytales are written about. You came into my life that night and turned my world upside down, and if I wasn't sure of how I felt then, I was sure the second you walked through that front door after missing for 353 days."

"Mike..." El whispered as tears crept into the corners of her eyes.

"El, I promise that if we are ever apart again for any reason, even for a day or a weekend, I will call you every night. I promise to always be on your side and trust your gut instincts, even if no one else does. I promise to never let anything hurt you again... at least not without a damn good fight. I know I can't promise that nothing bad will ever happen, but I can promise that you will never have to go through anything alone," Mike continued. "You're not just the most important thing in my world, El. You *are* my world." El let a tiny sob escape her lips before raising to her tiptoes and planting a kiss on Mike's lips. He

happily reciprocated, and when their lips pulled apart, El moved her arms from around his neck to being draped around his waist while she rested her head on his chest again, closing her eyes. Mike gazed around at the dancefloor which was now covered with other couples swaying peacefully to the slow music that played. He wondered when it had transitioned from his and El's first dance into a slow dance for everyone, knowing he had missed it when he was lost in his bride's brown eyes.

The rest of the evening passed in a blur. Mike and El moved from person to person thanking them for coming, and Mike was certain he told the story of how he proposed at least a dozen times. During El's bouquet toss, Nina was the one to catch it, and when Mike tossed the garter, Lucas was its lucky recipient. Lucas and Nina joked with one another about which of them should switch with the other's romantic partner; Dustin becoming wide-eyed and stammering much to Lucas's amusement, and Max pretending to happily accept the bouquet while eyeing Lucas with a smirk.

Karen and Joyce had each gushed over El's dress and told her repeatedly how beautiful she was. Many guests told the both of them how touched they were by the sincerity in Mike and El's vows and how obviously true their love was. After hours of pleasantries and wedding traditions, El was exhausted and ready to be in comfortable clothes and spend some alone time with her husband.

As the clock neared midnight, Mike pulled up to Hopper's cabin, El in the passenger seat, and put his car in park. His ears were ringing and his head was spinning from the bustle that had been the entire day. Looking to his right, Mike admired how the moonlight shone on El's face, illuminating her features as she slept with her head resting against the window. After a moment, he stepped out of his car and walked around to the other side, slowly opening El's door, careful not to let her fall out. She jerked awake as the door opened, and Mike slinked an arm around her shoulders to steady her.

"Asleep on our wedding night before we even get home?" Mike teased, reaching across El to unbuckle her seatbelt.

"No, not sleeping. Just a catnap," El said groggily, draping an arm over Mike's shoulder and letting him scoop her up into his arms. Mike

walked with El in his arms up the steps of the front porch and to the front door. Hopper agreed to let the newlyweds have his cabin to themselves tonight, as they were planning on leaving first thing in the morning for their honeymoon. Knowing her husband's hands were full supporting her, El decided to forego the key and instead unlocked the cabin door with a light tilt of her head. Mike carried her inside and kicked the door closed, setting her down to stand in front of himself.

"I guess if you're tired, you can go to sleep," Mike said with fake disappointment on his face as he placed his hands on El's waist and pulled her closer to him.

"I can sleep on the plane tomorrow," El shrugged, wrapping her arms around his neck.

"Have I told you how much I love you?" Mike smiled, leaning his forehead against hers.

"You have," El chuckled. "But why don't you tell me again?" Mike leaned in and closed the gap between their lips, embracing his only true love, his El, his wife.

Five Years Later

The clock read 6:15AM on December 25, 1998. Multicolored lights cast their light on the walls and ceiling as the Christmas tree stood shining bright in front of the picture window in the living room. Mike sat on the couch, his arm around El whose head was resting on his shoulder, admiring the stacks of presents under the tree. They had woken up at 3AM after a four-hour nap so they could wrap and place the presents knowing the kids were sound asleep. For being the product of procrastination and middle of the night coffee, Mike didn't think the gifts looked half bad. Just then, Mike and El's eyes darted upward as they heard the familiar sounds of their four-year-old climbing out of bed and padding into the upstairs hallway.

"Like clockwork," Mike muttered, as their daughter woke up at this time every morning. El sat up and kissed Mike's cheek, knowing the peacefulness they had been enjoying was over for the day, and the two of them walked to the base of the stairs to wait.

"Good morning, sleepyheads," El called up the stairs when their daughter and son arrived at the top.

"Mommy, did Santa come?" asked the little girl as she rubbed the sleep from her eyes with balled up fists.

"Come down and see for yourself!" El exclaimed, waving for the children to join them. The little ones climbed carefully down the stairs to their parents who were patiently waiting to take them into the living room. Mike and El followed the children from the stairs to the living room and couldn't hold back their happiness as their kids gasped and squealed in delight at the sight of so many presents under the tree that the tree skirt had disappeared.

"Santa came!" the little girl squealed, jumping up and down.

"Allie, why don't you pass out the presents this year? Keep the ones that have your name on them, and give Mason the ones that say his name," Mike suggested. Allie was in pre-school this year, and Mike and El wanted her to be ready for kindergarten in the fall. She was working hard on learning her letters, and she was very good at spelling her full name, Allison Jane Wheeler, so they were helping her learn some other words and names.

"Okay, come on Masey," Allie grabbed Mason's hand and led her three-year-old brother over to the Christmas tree.

Allie picked up each gift one at a time and studied the name on the tag to determine whether it said "Allie" or "Mason." The two children ripped through the wrapping paper, opening many new toys, games, books, and clothes. When they first had Allie, Mike had been hesitant to go overboard with Christmas gifts, not wanting their children to be spoiled. But El had insisted that she wanted her children to have the complete opposite type of childhood than she herself had, and that included having mounds of presents to open on Christmas morning.

An hour later, all of the presents had been opened, some had been put together and played with, and both kids were already starting to get fussy. Mike walked into the kitchen and began preparing Eggos and hot chocolate for his family. Soon, the four of them were seated around the kitchen table enjoying breakfast.

"Allie, do you like what Santa brought you?" El asked her daughter.

"Yes!" the little girl exclaimed, her dark brown hair bouncing with her as she bounced in her chair.

"What about you, Mason?" El asked, turning to her son who was swirling a piece of his Eggo around in the syrup on his plate. "Do you like what Santa brought you?" Without speaking, Mason began nodding his head excitedly, his messy dark hair flying wildly around his head. Both children had inherited Mike's extremely dark hair color, but to Mike's delight, they had gotten most of their other features from El.

"Are we going to gramma's house today, Mommy?" Allie asked before stuffing another bite of waffle into her mouth.

"Yes, honey, we're going to grandma and grandpa's house after breakfast," El smiled.

"Yay! I can't wait to show gramma my new pink dress. Can I wear it?" Allie asked, bouncing up and down in her chair with big brown doe eyes.

"Of course," El replied, making a mental note to bring a change of clothes for when Allie inevitably gets tired of wearing the dress when the excitement of the newness wears off.

"What time is your sister getting there?" El asked Mike across the table.

"I think she said they'll all be there by ten or eleven," Mike replied.

"Aunt Nancy?" Allie asked, perking up.

"Uh huh. Aunt Nancy, Uncle Jonathan, Emma, and Landon will all be there," Mike said. Allie squealed in excitement; she loved her older cousin Emma, and while they tried to get together as often as they could, it really only happened every couple of months.

"Guess who else will be there?" El said excitedly.

"Aunt Holly?" Allie guessed, and Mike laughed at El's expression,

knowing that wasn't who she was referring to.

"Well, yes, but who else?" El grinned. Allie scrunched her face up in thought and tapped her chin with her finger. Finally, she gave up and shrugged her slim shoulders, and El gave her the answer. "Pawpaw!"

Allie and Mason both jumped in their seats excitedly. They hadn't seen Hopper in over a month, and he was their favorite grandparent. After Mike and El first had Allie, they were happily surprised by how loving and involved Hopper wanted to be. A year later when they had Mason, Hopper was ecstatic to have a little boy around. Both children adored him, and Mike and El knew Hopper would give the world to them as well. When Allie was born, Mike and El had asked Hopper what he wanted to be called, and he said 'grandpa' made him sound too old, and El vetoed 'papa' for obvious reasons. Hopper had tossed around the idea of 'pop' briefly, until Mike jokingly called him 'Poppy Hoppy,' and Hopper instantly vetoed it, knowing Mike would train his children to torture him with that ridiculous name otherwise. Eventually, they agreed on 'pawpaw.'

"Now hurry up and go brush your teeth, and we'll be up to help you get ready," Mike said when it was obvious that Allie and Mason were finished eating and excitement had taken over. The two little ones hopped out of their seats and bounded up the stairs. Mike shook his head with a smile on his face as he gathered the plates from the table and walked them to the sink.

"And just think, in four more months, there will be another one," El chuckled, placing her hand on her swollen belly.

"Can't wait," Mike said, walking back over and taking El's hands to pull her onto her feet in front of him. He leaned in to kiss her sweetly and El slid her arms around his waist, holding him close until he pulled back from the kiss. "While we have some time alone, I want to give you your present." Mike reached into the pocket of his sweatpants and pulled out a small box with a bow on it.

"Mike, we said nothing big this year because the baby is coming in a few months," El whined, though Mike knew she wasn't really upset with him. Deep down, she had known there was no way Mike was going to follow that rule, even though he was the one who came up

with it.

"Who says this is something big? Look how small it is," Mike smirked, placing the box in her hand. El rolled her eyes and couldn't help but grin back at him. She pulled off the bow and opened the box to reveal a necklace on a delicate silver chain with five diamonds set in a row, the biggest in the middle and two smaller ones on each side of it.

"Honey, it's beautiful," El gasped, taking it out of the box to admire it.

"We've been married five years now," Mike shrugged, explaining the reason he chose the five diamonds.

"I love it," El smiled and placed her hand on the back of his head to pull him down into another kiss.

"Merry Christmas, El. I love you," Mike said quietly, his forehead leaning on hers.

"Merry Christmas, Mike. I love you too."

They spent the late morning and entire afternoon at Ted and Karen's with the whole family, and around 5pm, Mike and El and their kids headed over to Lucas and Max's house to meet the rest of the party for their annual Christmas get-together which had started the year Allie was born. Everyone had agreed that while they were getting older and starting their own families, it was still important to have their own traditions to keep their friendships strong. Lucas and Max had eagerly volunteered to host this year, as it was their first Christmas as a married couple. Dustin and Nina arrived, showing off an engagement ring on her left hand that had been placed there the night before on Christmas Eve. Will showed up with the woman he had started dating five months prior; so far the rest of the party loved her and hoped she would end up being the one for him.

After dinner and a few hours of hanging out, Mike and El left Max and Lucas's house with their children. They drove quietly around town; it was peaceful and dark, the only lights being the streetlights and Christmas decorations. Mike drove through a couple neighborhoods so Allie and Mason could 'ooh' and 'ahh' at the

Christmas lights. After twenty minutes, the approving sounds in the backseat ceased, and Mike and El knew that their kids had fallen asleep. When they pulled into their own driveway, Mike carefully scooped Allie into his arms, and El carried Mason. They took their children upstairs and tucked them in to bed, another successful Christmas in the books. When they laid down that night to fall asleep, El laid her head on Mike's shoulder as he laid on his back, and she draped her arm over his body, breathing in his scent as they drifted off to sleep. Fifteen years. She had been happily his for fifteen years. They had faced unspeakable terrors together, and now they were raising their own family. El hugged Mike closer to her as she fell asleep, a smile on her face, knowing that she finally had everything she dreamed of and everything she would ever need for the rest of her life.

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A/N: The End. I know after Chapter 19 of Her Worst Nightmare, several people requested a happy follow-up, so I really hope this lived up to your expectations. Please leave me a review and let me know what you thought. Additionally, I am open to suggestions about what you may want to see me write in the future. I like to stick to Mileven (while I support the existence of Lumax and Jancy, I'm just not as interested in writing them), but I am open to exploring different ways of writing Mileven. I know some people like an innocent Mileven, some people like explicit Mileven, I am currently writing a story about a broken up Mileven (check out my in-progress story Tied Together With A Smile if you're interested), so just let me know what you'd like to see in the future, and I will do my best! I do have some one-shots in progress that I work on when I have writer's block with TTWAS, and I am considering doing a collection of one-shots rather than another full-blown story right away. So leave me a review and let me know! Thanks so much for reading :)